

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	KG Ranch Utility Right of Way Easement – Jefferson River Crossing
Proposed Implementation Date:	August 2018
Proponent:	NorthWestern Energy (NWE)
Location:	SW1/4 SE1/4, Section 29, Township 1N, Range 1W
County:	Jefferson and Gallatin
Trust:	Navigable Waterways

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

NorthWestern Energy is requesting a new Right of Way Easement for utilities to pass under State Land. The proposed project will bore under the Jefferson River to install one 4-inch plastic gas main with a 2-inch plastic pipe for a tracer wire and connecting to existing 3-inch gas main on the north and south side of the river.

The project will provide and connect electrical services for the KG Ranch's irrigation system. This is a capital improvement project for NWE, currently there is a 3-inch suspended steel gas main on a bridge that provides utilities to the ranches irrigation system. Going under the Jefferson River will eliminate the exposure of the suspended steel gas main and eliminates costly maintenance and upkeep on the exposed main.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

None

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

None

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Proposed Action Alternative: Process the Right of Way Easement application for installation of a gas distribution pipeline.

No Action Alternative: Do not process the application and the existing suspended steel gas main that is attached to a nearby bridge remains the utility source for the ranches irrigation system.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.

Work will take place under the portion of State Land lying between the low water marks of the Jefferson River. No surface disturbance will occur; therefore, no adverse effects to geology and soil would be expected.

No Action Alternative: Existing suspended steel gas main that is attached to a nearby bridge remains the utility source for the ranches irrigation system. No change to status.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.

Implementation of either the No Action Alternative or Proposed Alternative Action is not expected to have significant adverse impacts on water quality, quantity and distribution.

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.

No adverse effects would be expected.

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.

No adverse effects would be expected.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

Implementation of either the No Action Alternative or Proposed Alternative Action is not expected to have significant adverse impacts on terrestrial, avian and aquatic life and habitats.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

Fifteen species were listed as species of concern by the Montana Natural Heritage Program for Township 1N, Range 1 W. Species include: Townsend's Big-eared Bat, Spotted Bat; Golden Eagle; Great Blue Heron; Burrowing Owl; Veery; Evening Grosbeak; Bobolink; Pinyon Jay; Clark's Nutcracker; Sage Thrasher; Brewer's Sparrow; Western Toad; Plains Spadefoot and Western Pearlshell. No adverse effect is expected to these species or fragile or limited environmental resources.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

Nearby State parcels were reviewed and no historical and/or archaeological sites were discovered.

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.

No aesthetic effects cumulative or initial are expected.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.

Implementation of either the No Action Alternative or Proposed Alternative is not expected to have demands on environmental resources of land, water, air or energy.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

No adverse effects would be expected.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

Underground pipeline versus attached to a bridge will improve and increase the electric reliability to the KG Ranch for their irrigation system. It will be safer for NWE crews because they will not have to conduct maintenance along a bridge.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

Improve and increased the electric reliability to the KG Ranch for their irrigation system will benefit agriculture and production.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

No effect.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

No effect.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:

Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

None.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:

List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

None

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:

Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

Not Applicable

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing.

Not Applicable

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

None

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

None

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

The easement, if granted would compensate the Trust for the encumbered rights.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Crystal Beckman	Date: 4/23/18
	Title: Acting Bozeman Unit Manager	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Action: Process the application for Utility Right of Way Easement

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

I have determined that none of the anticipated environmental impacts outlined in the EA are significant according to the criteria outlined in ARM 36.2.524. I find that no impacts are regarded as severe, enduring, geographically widespread, or frequent. Further, I find that the quantity and quality of various resources, including any that may be considered unique or fragile, will not be adversely affected to a significant degree. I find no precedent for future actions that would cause significant impacts, and I find no conflict with local, State,

or Federal laws, requirements, or formal plans. In summary, I find that the identified adverse impacts will be avoided, controlled, or mitigated by the design of the project to the extent that the impacts are not significant.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

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EIS

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More Detailed EA

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No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Katie Svoboda
	Title: Bozeman Unit Office Manager
Signature: 	Date: 4/23/2018